
DOCTORS CALL FOR LESS SCREENS AND MORE ACTIVE ROUTINES

Doctors are urging parents to turn off the wi-fi, limit screen time and increase the amount of physical activity their children enjoy these school holidays.

Australian Medical Association (AMA) Queensland President Dr Dilip Dhupelia said Queensland children had some of the lowest levels of organised sport participation in Australiaⁱ and school holidays provided the chance for families to create new, more physically active routines.

Less than half (48.6%) of Queensland children participated in an organised sport or physical activity outside of school at least once a week in 2018, according to Sport Australia's national AusPlay Surveyⁱⁱ. South Australia was the only other state with a lower participation rate (47.8%) than Queensland.

"Queensland has the perfect weather and environment for people of all ages to get out and about and enjoy an active lifestyle," Dr Dhupelia said.

"Combined with the fact that one in every four Queensland children is overweight or obese, these statistics are alarming. Our children deserve better."

Dr Dhupelia said while finding a balance between screen and active time was a struggle for busy families, particularly working parents, allowing their children to spend several hours a day on digital devices posed serious health risks.

"Apart from obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure, it could impact children's ability to sleep and learn, their mobility, their vision and their posture," he said.

Dr Dhupelia said a total of one hour of physical activity a day during the school holidays was a good start towards creating an active routine.

"It can be done in short bursts or in one go, and can be as simple as the family taking the dog for a walk after dinner, a game of soccer in the back yard or creating a fun indoor obstacle course," he said.

Queensland Health advises parents to limit video games, television and other screen time to two hours a day for children and recommends making small changes to daily routines to create more active lifestylesⁱⁱⁱ:

- Swap a drive to the local shops for a bike ride.
- Get off the bus a stop earlier and walk.
- Meet friends for a game in the park.
- Be active as a family, like going on a nature walk.

Dr Dhupelia said the habits instilled in children today would last a life time.

"Parents need to take the lead to make sure their children have the chance for a healthy future," he said.

Media contacts: Michelle Helle, Sequel PR: 0411 112 11; Chiara Lesevre, AMA Queensland: 0419 735 641;

ⁱ <https://www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/research/smi/ausplay/results/national>

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ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/news-alerts/news/23-free-ways-get-kids-moving-active-school-holidays>